The Languages of Music and Emotion in Joyce, Schoenberg, Cage, and Beckett

Research Thesis

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Writers of the modern and postmodern periods began experimenting with new modes of narration and form, often borrowing from musical structures to inform their work. Exploring this issue, Joseph Conrad writes that literature should "appeal to the magic suggestiveness of music – …the art of arts" (Conrad, 13). The magic of music Conrad writes about seems to lie in its highly formal nature, relying not on context or meaning, but on structure and variation, a characteristic which seems particularly suited to music and nearly impossible in literature. Whether attempting to describe music and reactions to music or employing musical forms or language in their texts, modern and postmodern authors continuously attempt to capture that magical musical characteristic.

This magical characteristic has often been described as the freedom music has from specific meaning or interpretation, as opposed to the sentimentality or signification associated with literature. Despite this characterization of music as being without concrete meaning, listeners tend to assign meaning to music, regardless of composer intent. Several movements have attempted to remove all context from music, for example, the 18th century movement toward absolute music (or music that is not about anything outside of the music itself). Music is particularly suited for this role of contextless art as it is inherently more concerned with form than other art forms such as literature. The overwhelming tendency for audiences, however, is to look for communication through musical works. Daniel Albright, in his work *Untwisting the Serpent*, explores music's ability to communicate when combined with language, drawing a comparison between music and hieroglyphs, a mode of communication held up by many modernist artists as a potentially universal language. Albright argues that works such as Mozart's *The Magic Flute* contain "musical equivalent[s] of a hieroglyph" (Albright, 43). The language used in the libretto, combined with what Albright calls the musical completeness of

phrases, work to provide the audience with an irrefutable image. In instances such as this, the intersection of language and music work as a type of hieroglyph, using the two artistic forms to create an instantaneous, potentially universal communicated idea. Similarly, in his work on literature and music, Conrad continues by arguing for a "perfect blending of form and substance" (Conrad, 13). This balance is achieved in the musical and textual intersection Albright details, resulting in a level of communication unavailable to either art form by itself. Despite the heavily formal focus of music, it is the balance between that form and the communicative nature of literature and language toward which modern and postmodern authors strive.

Two such authors who work towards this balance are James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, who borrow from Arnold Schoenberg and John Cage, respectively. In the modernist period, both Joyce and Schoenberg experiment with throwing out traditional literary and musical standards and rebuilding their own forms. Joyce modeled the Sirens episode of *Ulysses* off musical form while Schoenberg developed a new tonal system for his mid to late work. In the postmodern period, John Cage experimented with shapes, colors, and lines to represent music while Samuel Beckett wrote plays with no narrative or language, opting instead for music and noise. While the results of each of these artists' work are very different, they each employ musical forms in an attempt to create a new subset of literary texts. These new formal techniques strive for the perfect balance between form and substance which Conrad describes to arrive at a communication of emotion only available in the intersection between music and language.

By employing elements of musical structure in his literature, James Joyce in *Ulysses* seems to be striving for Conrad's perfect blend while exploring the aspects of communication the combination of art forms offers. Several critics have tried to make sense of Joyce's use of music in the Sirens episode of *Ulysses*. Most attempt to apply the fugal musical form Joyce himself

refers to in his schema (Ellman, appendix). This application falls short, however, as Joyce has called the structure both a fugue and a fuga per canonem, despite the terms having different musical characteristics. More recently, Josh Epstein in his work *Sublime Noise* has applied more experimental musical influences, such as George Anthiel, to Joyce's work while exploring the cultural situations which created a noisy experimentalism, both in music and literature. Also referring to more experimental musical influences, David Herman suggests a parallel between Schoenberg and Joyce in his article "'Sirens' after Schoenberg." By restructuring the basic units of both music and language, Herman argues Joyce and Schoenberg are in search of a universal grammar. In his book *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics*, Brad Bucknell, addresses the issue of musical and linguistic communication in Sirens in terms of written sound. He explains that this marriage of art forms "points up the problem of finding complete meaning in sound, whether expressive, or referential, whether spoken, written, played, or sung" (Bucknell, 137). While the musical and literary forms differ drastically, they share common ground in sound, particularly in Joyce's use of onomatopoeia, invented words, and musical form to add a more aural quality to his work. As Bucknell points out, this focus on sound and music is an attempt to find complete meaning or communication. Despite Joyce's assertion that he interacts with a fugal structure, these critics have identified more modern influences on Joyce's work. I follow this thread, drawing comparisons between Schoenberg's twelve tone structure and Joyce's Sirens structure. I then show that both Joyce and Schoenberg are attempting to find a new, more accurate form of communication. For Joyce, this new mode of communication occurs at the intersection between the formal characteristics of music and communicative aspects of language.

The move toward a more experimental musical association than Joyce had originally suggested fits. Both Epstein and Herman situate Joyce in the progressive musical atmosphere of

the modernist period. Similarly, Theodor Adorno engages with Schoenberg's work in a larger cultural landscape, drawing comparisons between other modern composers and examining their relationship with the political atmosphere. Instead of approaching Joyce's or Schoenberg's work from a cultural standpoint, I will take a comparative approach, examining the ways in which their works are finding similar ways to communicate. The early 20th century presented composers with the challenge of finding new structures to communicate through music. In his search for new, experimental forms, Schoenberg created the twelve tone composition method, a method which creates music entirely outside of the pre-established rules of Western art music while managing to be self-contained, presenting the listener with the structure for the entire piece in the first twelve notes. While Herman does draw a parallel between Joyce's and Schoenberg's formal experimentation techniques, he stops short of specifically applying Schoenberg's structure to Sirens. Joyce's interaction with twelve tone music goes beyond the claims Herman makes, actually using musical techniques with words and phrases while working toward the balance between form and content to achieve not a universal grammar, but a more accurate mode of communication in general.

Following in Joyce's footsteps, Beckett used music to inform many of his plays. Beckett began his career as Joyce's protégé, but quickly distinguished himself by focusing on plays and pushing his experimentation much further, eventually moving away from modernism and into postmodernism. Both Beckett and Cage pushed the boundaries of their predecessors even further. While Schoenberg and Joyce altered the structures of their art forms to enhance communication, Beckett and Cage move completely away from their structures. Cage disposes of traditional notation and instrumentation in favor of everyday objects and graphical or pictorial notation.

Beckett writes plays with little to no narrative and opts for a prioritizing of music and noise. This prioritization is particularly evident in his radio play *Words and Music.*

This play, with music realized for radio performance by Cage's peer Morton Feldman, illustrates two characters, Words and Music, and their struggles to articulate emotional concepts dictated by their lord, Croak. In an essay titled "Language and/or Music as Man's 'Comfort'? Beckett's Metamedial Allegory *Words and Music*," Werner Wolf examines this radio play as an allegory for creative faculties and the relation of these faculties to the human consciousness. He examines the musicalization of words and reads the end of the play as one of the few hopeful, positive moments in Beckett's dramatic career. Similarly, Stephen Benson in his essay "Beckett, Feldman, Joe and Bob: Speaking of Music in *Words and Music*" treats the play allegorically and evaluates the interdependence of words and music. Benson uses the phrase "contrapuntal radio" to describe the way "words, music and the sounds and silences in between" present a type of counterpoint of the voices of radio in which music is not spoken for by words, but has its own voice. More generally, Deborah Weagle in her book *Words and Music: Camus, Beckett, Cage, Gould* examines silence, words, music in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Cage's *4'33"* and *Song Books*. She relates silence in Beckett's works to death and time and takes the reader through Cage's use of language and pictorial instruction in his *Song Books*.

While *Words and Music* is clearly allegorical, and cooperation between words and music is encouraged and lauded by Croak, I focus on the addition of music to Beckett's works and how that relates to the paring down of seemingly indispensable characteristics such as language and plot. Both Cage and Beckett add many untraditional aspects to their works, but do so while discarding the traditional languages of their art forms, including language, musical notation, and traditional instruments. Specifically in *Words and Music,* narration and plot are minimized.

Instead, Beckett brings music and language into conversation with one another and makes narrative subordinate to emotional expression. While characterizing narrative in music is problematic, Cage removes other musical necessities to incite an emotional reaction he relates to the emotion experienced after certain phenomena in nature. In both artists' work, we see that with the use of these new languages, communication with the reader, listener, or performer is altered. Cage and Beckett are able to articulate large emotional concepts through their art forms, but they do so while leaving a significant amount of interpretation to the audience and performer.

Tracking these radical changes through the modern and into the postmodern period, we can see authors and composers altering or abandoning altogether the structures and languages of their art forms in favor of graphics, noise, and newly invented forms. In each of the works examined here, the author or composer abandons these earlier agreed upon standards in order to arrive at a new type of communication with audiences and performers. These authors mirror the innovations employed by experimental composers of the time to help articulate concepts which either art form on its own fails to encapsulate.

Chapter 1

Chromatic Communication: Joyce and Schoenberg

In his schema sent to Stuart Gilbert meant to shed light on the structure employed for *Ulysses*, James Joyce identifies the musical episode Sirens as a *fuga per canonem* (Ellman, appendix). Inspired by the deadly musical Sirens in *The Odyssey*, Joyce plays with the interaction between musical and literary forms, attempting to model the form of his episode off strict musical fugal structures. While Joyce seems content to reflect more traditional formal structures of music in his literature, using language readers would associate with Bach or Wagner, a closer look at experimental modernist composers' theories, particularly those of Arnold Schoenberg, reveal a much more modern musical echoing. It would be incorrect to characterize the innovations made by Bach and Wagner as unexperimental or unprogressive; however, their innovations had been digested and accepted by the musical community by Joyce's time. By examining the relationship between Schoenberg's musical structures and Joyce's own literary structures, we can draw parallels to better understand the formal musical interaction Joyce explored. Both Joyce and Schoenberg begin their pieces with an introduction of notes or phrases which will then be used and transformed. Each experiments with traditional ideas of tonality and harmony, removing the constraints of key or layering disparate trains of thought. Schoenberg's own intention for his experimental structures, comprehensibility, is reflected in Joyce's work. While each present their audience with a challenging work, both aim to establish structures with improved comprehensibility through an abandonment of classical structuring rules.

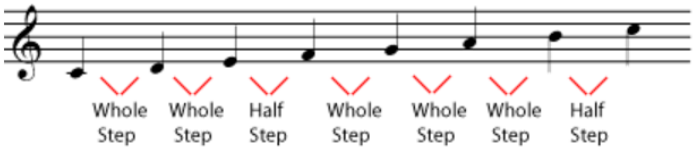
Many critics have attempted to track the fugal structure Joyce references through the Sirens episode of *Ulysses.* In his article "Fugal Structure in the Sirens Episode of 'Ulysses,'" David Cole lays out an analysis of this fugue, explaining it through the thematic material

presented in the episode and the novel as a whole. A fugue presents the listener with a number of musical phrases which are then developed through variations, generally in multiple voices or parts. Cole proposes that thematic material acts as these musical phrases. He focuses on the main themes of sexual desire and frustration, presented through the flirtatious Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy and the sexually frustrated Leopold Bloom toting his wife's pornographic novel. These themes are repeated, complicated and juxtaposed through the episode, mimicking the complex variation in musical themes typical of fugues.

While this argument presents a convincing theory on the fugal nature of the thematic elements in the episode, the article, and many others like it, fails to make sense of several musical issues. For example, despite a tonal association with fugal structures, Cole admits to a sense of atonality throughout the episode. In addition, rather than presenting the opening poem-like structure of the episode as an exposition, Cole chooses to address this as a prelude to the text, separating it from the overall fugal structure he lays out. His analysis makes use of the major themes in the episode and their variations and relations to different characters or voices, but doesn't address the musical variations on the smaller level of repeated and varied phrases through the episode, stating that "the term *fuga per canonem* is too specific" to adequately describe the musical variations on this micro level (Cole, 222). These variations are integral to the musical nature of the episode. Finally, he describes fugal forms as a texture driven structure, but his analysis does not allow for the overlapping, rich texture found in fugues. Rather, the statements of themes are spread out through the episode, transferred to different voices linearly while fugues are often characterized by multiple musical themes overlapping and stacking on top of one another.

Rather, by applying Arnold Schoenberg's practices and intentions to Joyce's work, we can see that Sirens aligns itself with twelve tone musical principals in its search for better communication. The structure of the Sirens episode mirrors that of twelve tone music, presenting the audience with a set of tones or phrases to track through the work. Joyce then varies and develops these phrases, illuminating their meaning by providing context and offering variations of the original phrases, a technique similar to Schoenberg's practice of offering variations to his primary tone row throughout a twelve tone piece. While Joyce may not have been directly influenced by Schoenberg, Joyce's formal experimentation falls in line with Schoenberg's own. By breaking down the agreed upon standards for artistic expression, modernist artists built new modes of communication, aiming for a more comprehensible art form and essentially creating new languages for expression.

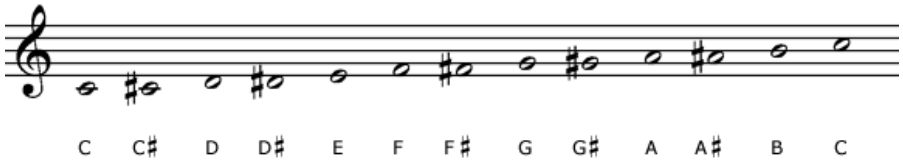
Beginning as early as 1923, Schoenberg began to lay out the principles for a new style of music. Traditional Western art music is based on a scale and key, eight notes separated by half and full steps to produce the acceptable, tonic notes to which the Western ear has become accustomed. This scale, exemplified below with the notation for a C Major scale from Rice University's "Major Keys and Scales", is the deciding factor in which notes will make up a particular piece.



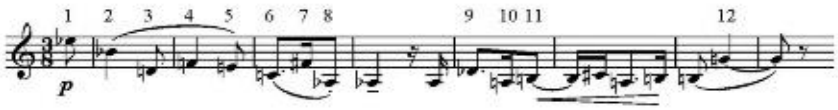
Motifs, or short melodies derived from the notes laid out in the scale, are decided on and then used throughout the piece in different ways depending on structure, but almost always as a theme for the listener to track through the piece and center themselves around. Without any musical training, the listener can intuitively feel the tonic of the key, or the first scale degree (in the case

of C Major, C), because of the composer's constant return to this note and tonic chord. Return to the tonic gives an intuitive feeling of conclusion or coming home.

As thought on tonality and key evolved, Schoenberg began experimenting with a radically new way of composing. With his twelve tone style, Schoenberg presents the listener with all twelve notes of the chromatic scale (shown below from The Music Notation Project's article "Improving Upon Traditional Music Notation"), a scale based on only half steps and which includes every note in the Western Art music repertoire.



He chooses an order for this set of tones, often referred to as a tone row. One such row, laid out from Schoenberg's Piano Concerto by the New York Philharmonic's article "Row, Row, Row that Tone" is shown below.



As the piece progresses, the composer avoids repetition, repeating tones only after all other 11 tones have been played. While this may sound like it would result in monotonous repetition of the same theme or row, Schoenberg and other twelve tone composers avoid this repetition through transformations of the tone row, generally through inversion (the inversion of the intervals between each note in the row, so that a minor third up becomes a minor third down), retrograde (the tone row in reverse order), or retrograde inversion (a combination of the two). In addition, the composer can transpose the tone row, beginning on a different note than the original tone row, but preserving the intervals between notes so as to still use every note in the chromatic scale.

The reader can begin to see comparisons between Schoenberg's twelve tone style and the Sirens structure immediately. The opening section of this episode appears initially to be a poem, concerned more with sound than with narrative or other literary principles and somewhat set aside from the rest of the text. While normally compared to a motif or multiple leitmotifs, this opening section also resembles Schoenberg's twelve tone principle of initially introducing the ordered chromatic notes as a set to be used throughout the piece. As illustrated in the example above, Schoenberg takes the twelve tones of the chromatic scale (as labeled 1-12) and orders them into his initial tone row, a concept similar to a Classical Western composer selecting his musical theme for the rest of the work. Unlike traditional Western art music, however, Schoenberg's method of composing twelve tone music continues with the goal of using this set of tones with no favorability of any note over another, effectively eliminating the issue of tonality and key. A more typical method of composing a theme on which to base a piece of music is to select a key to define which notes will make up the piece. Schoenberg rejects this method, instead choosing an order for the twelve chromatic notes of the Western scale and working to use each note an equal number of times, eliminating any tendency for the listener to identify a specific note as the tonal center or first scale degree.

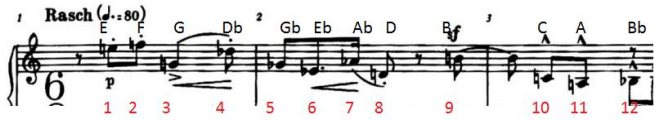
On initially describing his new twelve tone composition method, Schoenberg calls the procedure "*Method of Composing with Twelve Tones Which are Related Only with One Another*" (Schoenberg, 218). While slightly clumsier than the simple 'twelve tone' titling, this description is illuminating as to what is interesting or revolutionary about this type of practice. Typically, the relationship between tones in a given piece would be that of scale and key. Regardless of whether or not a piece is composed in only one key, each note is in some way related to a key presented in the piece either initially or through modulations between keys. Schoenberg,

however, establishes his rows without the limitations of key, allowing his rows to be related only in their proximity to one another in the piece.

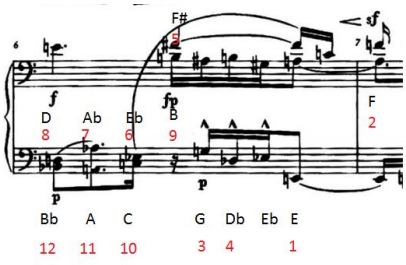
Like Schoenberg beginning his twelve tone pieces with the row on which the rest of the piece will be built, Joyce introduces the reader to sounds and phrases that will be repeated through the episode. Upon first reading, the phrases presented seem to have nothing in common, either with one another or the rest of the novel, other than sharing the space on a page. The vowel sounds Joyce uses go from high, thin [e] and [I] sounds, such as "chips, picking chips" to low, full [u] and [o] sounds, such as "Oo!" and "Done" (Joyce, 210-211) mimicking a chromatic scale moving from high to low. In his book *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics* Brad Bucknell addresses the opaque nature of this opening, stating that "the phrases are reduced to the organization of their phonemes alone" (Bucknell, 133). While these words are generally recognizable and definable, their lack of context renders them virtually useless as communicative language. Instead, the words operate purely sonically. As they have little to no literal meaning, their relation to one another depends solely on Joyce's decision to group them together. These tendencies are directly related to Schoenberg's initial titling of his new method of composition. Joyce explores the concept of vowel pitches and allows his phrases to become musical without a clear relation to one another.

Schoenberg's twelve tone pieces continue by only using variations of the original twelve ordered notes presented. In writing on his own techniques, Schoenberg addresses the issue of repetition and how his resistance to repetition contributes to the twelve tone process. Instead of adhering to the classical standard of repeating phrases to assign a level of importance to them, Schoenberg argues for variation. Clarifying further he writes "by variation I mean a way of altering something given, so as to develop further its component parts…the outcome always

being something new" (Schoenberg, 102). This concept is clearly illustrated in the variations and evolutions of his twelve tone rows. After presenting the initial, prime row, Schoenberg varies this row through several different methods detailed previously. Shown below is the opening row of Schoenberg's twelve tone suite op. 25. As labeled, Schoenberg begins by presenting his ordered row to the listener, here labeled 1-12 to denote their order in the row rather than their scale degree.



As the piece continues, Schoenberg uses this ordered row in different ways to provide variety while still referencing back to his initial row.



Here, although collapsed and distributed between voices, we see Schoenberg's retrograde, or reversal, of the original tone row. Schoenberg collapses the first (originally last) six tones into three sets of simultaneous notes, then continues by distributing the tones between hands with some minor, grace note type repetition. Upon first listen, or to the untrained ear, this phrase may sound like an entirely new ordering of the notes. However, further analysis reveals a direct relationship to the original tone row. Instead of repeating the same tone row, Schoenberg has further developed the row, maintaining the original integrity of intervals while making it feel new to the listener.

While Joyce strays from this method somewhat, using more than just the phrases he initially presented, he does stay true to a lack of "tonality." Joyce works with the same resistance to repetition, repeating phrases throughout the episode, but always significantly separated and without emphasizing any one phrase. He avoids beginning and ending the episode with the same phrase, another standby in the establishment of tonality in music, and allows his phrases to evolve and change, keeping the reader from becoming too comfortable with any one phrase. Despite the musical aspects of the phrases Joyce introduces and builds on through the episode, he abstains from centering the episode on any one phrase.

If we liken each phrase Joyce initially presents with a part of a twelve tone motif or row, we can see Joyce adhering to twelve tone principles. For example, the phrases "*da capo*" and "bravo" (Joyce, 238, 235) may allude back to the opening phrase "Done./Begin!" (Joyce, 211). While the later phrases contain none of the words from the original phrase, the reader can interpret the later phrases as a variation and transformation of the original while still communicating a similar idea. Another example of this can be seen in Bloom's signature on the letter he writes to Martha Clifford. The introduction to the episode specifies a line as "P. S. So lonely blooming" (Joyce, 210). This phrase is expanded in the episode to read "P. S. The rum tum tum … Why minor sad?… P. P. S. La la la ree. I feel so sad today. La ree. So lonely. Dee" (Joyce, 230). In this instance, Joyce not only expands on the line initially presented to the reader, but includes some musical qualities as well.

First, Bloom identifies the music he is hearing as being in a minor key and contributing to his sense of sadness and loneliness. As Bloom sings along to the music being performed, he realizes that his sense of sadness is brought on by both a loneliness he generally feels and the minor key he is currently hearing. Joyce also uses musical sounds here. His phrase "rum tum

tum" mimics a drum or other percussion instrument, and "dee" could be a musical sound he is hearing, or perhaps a reference to the key of D. Joyce continues this musical linguistic trend with the sounds "la" and "so," both solfege symbols used by singers to articulate scale degrees while reading music without lyrics (or 'sol,' a more accurate solfege spelling, if the reader were to blur the line between the words "so" and "lonely"). Even the letters that are not overtly musical, P and S, are read more as sounds than words, giving them a more musical or aural quality. These musical allusions bring the reader's attention to the issue of expressing musical sounds and concepts with language, adding a layer in the musical/literary overlap beyond the structural mirroring Joyce alludes to in his schema.

Another musical way to view the Sirens episode of *Ulysses* is through the lens of harmony and part-writing. There are many voices, or musical parts, intertwined through the episode, from the blind man's tapping to Bloom's own thoughts to a narrative voice. Andreas Fischer, in his essay "Strange Words, Strange Music," articulates this idea with an example from the reaction to Simon Dedalus' rendition of "M'Appari" (Fischer, 252). While this passage is typeset as "Bravo! Clapclap. Good man, Simon. Clappyclapclap" (Joyce, 227), the reader can imagine these outbursts as actually occurring all at once, notated as:

Bravo! Good man, Simon.

Clapclap. Clappyclapclap.

While in this particular passages "parts" are concerned with the same topic, several instances of this phenomenon involve an overlap of disparate subjects. As each of these "parts" seem to be preoccupied with sometimes entirely different topics, the reader can think of them as two melodic parts at odds with one another, not attempting harmonization. This method is in line with Schoenberg's own thoughts on part writing. He explains, "The path to be trodden here

seems to me the following: not to look for harmonies, since there are no rules for those, no values, no laws of construction, no assessment. Rather, to write parts" (Schoenberg, 137). He continues to argue in later essays, explaining a method he calls linear counterpoint, that notes sounding together need not be related in any way or produce harmonies. This structural method is mirrored in Joyce's use of voices. The most concrete example of this can be seen during Simon Dedalus' performance of "The Croppy Boy." As Simon Dedalus sings the Irish ballad, Bloom begins internalizing the lyrics, thinking "Met him pike hoses. Philosophy. O rocks! All gone. All fallen. At the siege of Ross his father, at Gorey all his brothers fell" (Joyce, 234). If notated as Simon's applause was, the passage would read:

Met him pike hoses. Philosophy. O rocks!

All gone. All Fallen. At the siege of Ross his father at Gorey all his brothers fell.

Here, Bloom thinks simultaneously of a conversation he had with his wife earlier that day regarding the word metempsychosis and the lyrics to the song Simon is performing. While the lyrics to "The Croppy Boy" are in no way related to his thoughts on the exchange with his wife, he overlaps the thoughts, allowing them to coexist in his mind. If the reader relates a central topic to the idea of key, the reader can liken this overlap to some sort of dissonance in which two unrelated notes are simultaneously played. Much like a key in Western art music is meant to define appropriate notes in a given piece or movement, topics in passages of novels are meant to provide context and continuity for the reader. In addition to being comparable to dissonance, this stylistic choice seems to work against any previous "laws of construction" applied to literature, adding another layer in which the readers can find similarities between Joyce and Schoenberg (Schoenberg, 137).

Section II. Joyce, Schoenberg and Communication

These aspects of Joyce's work seem to support the analysis that *Ulysses* works to decenter and destabilize the reader by breaking away from traditional narration and language. Joyce's apparent interaction with post-tonal music may suggest a move toward a narrative strategy which aims to keep the reader confused and on unequal footing. The post-tonal and twelve tone musical focus on eliminating a home key, combined with Joyce's treatment of the concept of home in *Ulysses*, seem to argue in favor of this interpretation. For most listeners, particularly just after its creation, twelve tone music results in unfollowable and unresolved pieces. Bloom's constant wandering and Joyce's structural variation from episode to episode may leave readers with a similar feeling. However, Joyce's treatment of music in the Sirens episode and Schoenberg's intentions in creating twelve tone music suggest that the parallels between twelve tone music and *Ulysses* are attempts at an improved mode of communication. While their innovations caught audiences off guard, causing a feeling of decentering, their intentions were quite the opposite.

While Schoenberg and Joyce were not in direct communication or influenced directly by one another, given that Schoenberg first wrote on his twelve tone principles in 1923 and the Sirens episode of *Ulysses* was first published in 1919, their similar methodologies are enlightening as to overall intent. Despite the off-putting nature of twelve tone music, Schoenberg explains "Composition with twelve tones has no other aim than comprehensibility" (Schoenberg, 215). This seems counterintuitive in light of Schoenberg's complete disregard for the rules that have made western art music. He continues to argue that the difficulty involved in the creation of twelve tone music simply requires a well-prepared listener to be comprehensible. The similarities in methodology between Joyce and Schoenberg suggest a desire for comprehensibility, despite the difficulty each artist presents to their audience. Schoenberg argues that this new attempt at

comprehensibility came out of a necessity associated with the tremendous changes in thought on Western art music rules. Schoenberg describes a gradual dethroning of tonality, beginning with Wagner's use of chromaticism and changing tonality, and continuing through Debussy who achieves an "emotional comprehensibility" through "extended tonality" (Schoenberg, 216). The twelve tone compositional method is meant to extend this comprehensibility beyond an overarching and vague emotional communication. These radical changes, similar in many ways to the radical changes Joyce makes in structuring *Ulysses*, such as using musical structures and varying each episode's construction, are a direct attempt at comprehensibility within a new system of understanding, one requiring only a knowledge of this new system to fully access the implications of the music. Joyce adheres to this idea by releasing his schema, providing readers with the structural knowledge they need to interpret his work. Bloom ruminates on this topic when he thinks "Beauty of music you must hear twice" (Joyce, 233-234). Here Joyce suggests there is a beauty in music that requires an informed listener. Whether this information comes from repeated listenings or a technical understanding of music, there is a suggestion that this complexity which requires more than just a passive listener provides the listener with more. If Joyce's methodology was at all similar to Schoenberg's, which seems to be the case in the Sirens episode structurally, the difficulty in the crossroads of language and music is in fact an attempt at a new form of comprehensibility.

In addition, the self-contained nature of both Joyce's episode and Schoenberg's twelve tone pieces conforms to this principal. Assuming the listener has some knowledge of twelve tone musical principals, Schoenberg provides the listener with everything they will need to follow the piece in the first twelve notes. The listener can then follow these twelve tones through the piece. This structure results in a piece that requires nothing outside of the piece itself to achieve

comprehensibility. Individual episodes of *Ulysses* have a similar phenomenon. Specifically in the Sirens episode, Joyce, like Schoenberg, provides the reader with the phrases they should follow throughout the episode in the initial poem. By providing the reader or listener with the information they need to comprehend the piece, Joyce and Schoenberg remove the need for additional knowledge to improve comprehensibility of their work.

When comparing Schoenberg's initial twelve tone introduction to Joyce's Sirens overture, the reader can begin to see a search for comprehensibility. As previously discussed, Joyce and Schoenberg find common ground in their initial introduction of notes or phrases that seem to have little or nothing to do with one another. However, as the musical piece or episode continues, these abstract phrases are given meaning and context. Joyce's "jingly jingle jaunted jingling" (Joyce, 210) becomes "a jaunting car" jingling by (Joyce, 217). Close study of a Schoenberg twelve tone piece, as previously shown, reveal passages to be not new and unfamiliar phrases, but transformations of the original twelve tones, allowing the original twelve tones to tell the story of the piece and contribute to the theme on a larger scale. By introducing the reader or listener to unfamiliar, contextless phrases and then slowly unravelling the meaning, Joyce and Schoenberg invite the reader or listener to join them on their quest for a new comprehensibility. In Bucknell's quote previously referred to describing the phonetic nature of the opening section, he suggests that this phonetic nature is related to the lack of "narrative context" (Bucknell, 133). As Joyce gives context to the sounds previously presented as nearly abstract music, he begins to bridge the gap between the phonetic and the signified.

The idea of comprehensibility can additionally be traced to this episode's use of translations and foreign language in songs. While Joyce is working with musical form and literature to establish a new context for comprehensibility, he also incorporates older forms of

communication across conceptual borders. Despite the aria having originally been written in German, Joyce incorporates parts of both the Italian and English translations of the aria "Ach so Fromm" or "M'appari" in the episode. As is typical of translations of lyrics, the English version of the aria Joyce introduces is an imperfect version of the original. This can be simply a technical necessity, as the translator must work to fit a new language to the original musical accompaniment. However, translators are also tasked with the charge of working with the language and music to develop a piece with the same emotional feel as that of the original. Joyce specifically selects not only music with lyrics to focus on, but music that has the hurdle of translation added to its goal of communication. Given his examination of the interaction between music and language, Joyce appears to be drawing the reader's attention to a further complication in communication through the languages of music, lyrics, and literature.

In his lectures detailed in *Course in General Linguistics,* Saussure explains the arbitrary nature of language, citing the lack of connection beyond convention between a word and the thing to which it refers (Saussure, 67). In his essay "Strange Words, Strange Music," Andreas Fischer attempts to apply this definition to music, explaining that there is no combination of musical sounds that have conventional meaning, as there is in spoken and written language, however arbitrary this relationship may be. Joyce plays with the issue of communication through arbitrary languages, namely music and English, not only by attempting to communicate with a combination of the two languages, but also by introducing issues of foreign language and translation. Not only does Joyce introduce a language for which we as readers do not have the basis of conventionality to depend, but he introduces an imperfect translation from these foreign languages into English, apparently translated more for the feeling or idea of the text than the

precise meaning. This imperfect translation implies a gap between the language and reality that is supplemented with the communication of the music.

Joyce deals directly with this issue when Bloom, affected by the music he hears, thinks "Words? Music? No: it's what's behind" (Joyce, 226). Bloom continues to think through this idea, coming to the conclusion "Language of love" (Joyce, 226). He seems to be suggesting that his emotional reaction to the music is not inspired by the words or music themselves, but by the language of love that is somehow tied up in this combination of mediums and the feelings they evoke. By presenting this issue through the lens of Schoenberg's musical principles and their relation to comprehensibility, Joyce bridges the gap between the music, lyrics, translation, and what is actually being communicated, namely a feeling of love that exists behind the musical components. With this phrase, Joyce seems to be discounting the imperfections of the translation in defense of this intersection between language and music to arrive at accurate communication, the thing behind the words and music. Joyce makes this argument not only with this phrase, but with his attempts to interact with music through formal experimentation and literary interpretations of music and sound throughout the episode. Joyce's structural decisions combined with Bloom's thoughts on the music and lyrics he hears suggest that the episode's intersection between music and language results in a communication beyond either art form.

An alternate interpretation of this moment might lead the reader to an assertion that neither music nor words are arriving at the language of love Bloom identifies. Bloom's thoughts identify neither as the source of his conclusion. He goes as far as attempting to separate the music from the lyrics when he considers the mathematics that create music. He thinks, "But suppose you said it like: Martha, seven times nine minus x is thirtyfive thousand" (Joyce, 228). We can think of math as another form of universal communication, perhaps suggesting that the

lyrics add little to the communicability of the piece. While math does not communicate traditional phrases or sentences, the principles of math are universally accepted and are written in the same manner in many different languages. Additionally, the principles of math and logic have been equated to those of grammatical structure, suggesting a universality in math, logic, and grammar, despite language differences (Herman, 476). Despite this universality, Bloom thinks about the gap between the math that makes up music and the musical sounds themselves. After he imagines himself communicating with Martha using mathematical equations, he realizes it would "Fall quite flat" (Joyce, 228), using musical language to say that the real communication or comprehensibility happens in the sound of the music. Here, Joyce rejects the idea of communication through music alone.

This mathematical moment alone seems to support an interpretation of lack of communication in any art form, but this conclusion is rejected by Joyce's use of songs, rather than absolute music, in the episode. Instead of focusing on a more mathematical, absolute music with no lyrics or context outside itself, Joyce favors music that not only incorporates lyrics, but which provides a narrative thread. This is evidenced in his use of "M'Appari," an aria which has a clear necessity of narrative communication in its original, operatic context, and "The Croppy Boy," a song which details a story of Irish rebellion. Additionally, the narrative of "M'Appari" lines up with Bloom's own situation. The aria, introduced at an emotional height of the opera, details the singer's heartbreak at having lost the woman he loves. Joyce introduces this piece at a moment when Bloom is feeling similarly, ruminating over his wife's probable infidelity (Weaver). By including a piece that relates directly to Bloom's own thoughts, and allowing Bloom to come to the "language of love" interpretation of the piece, Joyce suggests that the combination of music, lyrics, and literature strengthens his attempt to communicate Bloom's

feelings to the reader. These narrative songs mirror Joyce's own formal choices, choosing to tell stories through musical structure rather than traditional literary structures. As Bloom clearly states, music without these narrative threads or further meanings leaves much to be desired. Despite Bloom's inability to pinpoint aspects of the music or words that lead him to his conclusion, Joyce undermines suggestions of a lack of communication in both arts or either art separately. Instead, he emphasizes the intersection of music and language by focusing on songs with a narrative focus that lead Bloom to his interpretive conclusions.

The choice to incorporate only songs in this episode seems particularly important to the linguistic and formal experimentation Joyce employs. By using linguistic evolution similar to Schoenberg's evolution of tonal rows, Joyce pushes the boundaries of what can be communicated with words and musical form when the traditional structures are stripped away. By presenting the reader with the phrases he intends to make clear and transform through the episode, Joyce gives the reader all the information they need to make sense of the progression of the episode, creating a self-contained form of communication, just as Schoenberg prepares the listener for everything that will follow by presenting him with the initial tonal row on which all subsequent rows will be based. However, unlike Schoenberg, this intersection between musical structure and linguistic form and experimentation results in a more perfect comprehensibility. While both are striving for further communication through new formal structures, the specific intersection between these two art forms, literature and music, is essential to Joyce's communicability. As evidenced by Conrad's statements on musical and literary interaction, as well as the general modernist tendency to depict musicality through text, the search for communication through music and language is a phenomenon which extended beyond Joyce and

Ulysses. Joyce's musical experimentation represents a larger trend of experimentation with disparate art forms to come closer to the universal communication modernists desired.

Chapter 2

New Languages in the Communication of Emotion

Samuel Beckett has often been described as a musical writer (Wolf, 147). His command of music comes through in his treatment of the human voice and strict attention to rhythm. In his essay " ' Something is Taking its Course': Dramatic Exactitude and the Paradigm of Serialism in Samuel Beckett," Harry White argues that the precision Beckett employs, particularly in his late dramatic works, mirrors Schoenberg's serial composition techniques. He further defines this precision as Beckett's attention to "structural organization, repudiation of realism, and the elemental condition of language" (White, 162). Much of his argument rests on the strict organization Beckett uses with limited language. His argument, however, seems not to go far enough. While Beckett's precision is reminiscent of the exactitude of Schoenberg's style, Beckett takes his innovation further than Schoenberg. Rather than simply experimenting with precision, structurally and linguistically, Beckett removes fundamental aspects of the dramatic genre. Plays are performed with dancing and music and feature minimal or no plots or words, aspects that suggest a different type of performance art. These tendencies toward a total overhaul of dramatic art mirror John Cage's experimentation more closely. Like Beckett, Cage does away with seemingly indispensable aspects of music, such as traditional instruments and notation, and adds visual and performative aspects, again arriving at something somewhat separate from traditional music performance. Both Cage and Beckett apply aspects of other performative arts to their work to achieve a new type of performance.

For Cage, this new type of performance takes the shape of "happenings," a production which features multiple art forms and media and often incorporates audience participation. Even his strictly musical works do not generally resemble traditional musical performances, often featuring few or no instruments and requiring strange performance techniques, such as the

drinking water or watering flowers in *Water Walk.* For Beckett, these performances take the shape of drama without much plot or language and often including music or recorded sound. One such play, *Nacht und Träume*, features a man humming Schubert's "Nacht und Träume" and then dreaming that he brings himself a glass of water. The lack of language and plot, combined with the only sound being that of music, leaves this play in a middle ground somewhere between traditional dramatic works and musical performance. While the humming of a portion of a song does not result in a musical performance, it hardly constitutes a traditional play.

This move away from traditional dramatic works toward works which incorporate other mediums continues throughout Beckett's career. One such work which features music equally if not superior to language and plot is his radio play *Words and Music*. The play presents two characters, Words and Music, struggling to articulate ideas presented by their Lord, Croak. Words and Music, or Joe and Bob, respectively, fight for approval from Croak who challenges them to work together to articulate large concepts such as love and age. By focusing on Words' inability to articulate the universal ideas Croak presents, Beckett highlights the arbitrary nature of language, a language he later abandons in plays entirely devoid of speaking. Croak, a character whose name suggests a noise somewhere between speaking and singing, acts as a sort of chance music composer similar to John Cage, providing the basis for musical or linguistic composition and then removing his influence over the final production. In Croak's role as a type of composer, Beckett's rejection of language and plot, and in John Cage's composition methods and performance instructions, we can see a move away from the traditional languages of these artists' media, namely language and musical notation, and the way this move affects communication between artist, performer, and audience. In their abandonment of known

languages, Beckett and Cage find a middle ground between authorial control, performer liberties, and audience interpretation.

Section I: Beckett's Musicality

Early in Beckett's dramatic career, the reader can already see clear musical tendencies in his work, particularly in relation to rhythm. *Waiting for Godot,* for example, features short rhythmic sections juxtaposed with longer, more natural sounding lines. This juxtaposition works to emphasize the short rhythmic parts featured throughout the work. One such instance occurs when Pozzo has a lengthy passage instructing Lucky to set up his picnic. While Pozzo doesn't have very many long phrases, his interaction takes a significant amount of time and the rhythm of the lines seems to be loose and interjected sporadically. Immediately following this passage, Estragon and Valdimir exchange quick, repetitive phrases:

ESTRAGON: It's the rope.

VLADIMIR: It's the rubbing.

ESTRAGON: It's inevitable.

VLADIMIR: It's the knot.

ESTRAGON: It's the chafing. (Beckett, 19)

As Walter Beckett explains in his essay "Music in the Works of Samuel Beckett," these quick exchanges are "reminiscent of an operatic recitative" (Beckett, 181). These sections, which are found throughout the play, feature short, rhythmic phrases that fall somewhere between pure spoken language and a rhythmic musical piece. Recitative sections are still sung, but are meant more to move the plot along and are almost always sung with a following aria. These passages of *Waiting for Godot,* are still spoken, but the intense rhythmicality gives the passage a musical

feel. Here, and throughout his dramatic works, Beckett clearly places the voice with a sense of musicality.

Later in his career, Beckett explored the addition of actual music to his work with the aforementioned radio play *Words and Music*. The play initially puts Words and Music in competition with one another to explain human emotions prompted by Croak. Beckett quickly asserts Words' lack of articulation by presenting the listener or reader with both his practiced speech as well as the speech Croak demands, both of which are identical despite referring to entirely separate themes: sloth and love. This idea is furthered when Words mistakenly inserts the word "sloth" into his speech on love (Beckett, 334), suggesting the two terms are nearly interchangeable in regard to his descriptions of them. By having Words prepare and use a speech with no context as to what his topic is, Beckett presents the words used to describe the ideas as arbitrary and virtually meaningless. He puts this idea into words with the line, "Do we mean love, when we say love?" (Beckett, 335). Even as Words works to capture an idea, he undermines his own work by questioning our understanding of the word he works from in the first place.

Words' inarticulate nature is further proven when Croak asks for a speech on yet another topic: age. Words stumbles to come up with a speech to satisfy Croak, beginning, "Age is…age is when…old age I mean…if that is what my Lord means" (Beckett, 335-336). Tellingly, Words stumbles between different clarifications of the word 'age' hoping for further input from Croak. Words' initial inability to say anything meaningful and different in relation to the prompt 'age' solidifies Beckett's assertion that language is in fact arbitrary. Having been given a word on which to speak, Words is initially unable to grasp precisely what Croak is looking for, suggesting a gap between the word 'age' and the reality it is meant to point towards.

At this moment the reader can also see the uninvolved role Croak takes as composer of Music and Words. In his essay "Language and/or Music as Man's 'Comfort'? Beckett's Metamedial Allegory *Words and Music*," Werner Wolf treats the radio play allegorically, classifying Words and Music as representative of their namesake creative faculties. He has a more difficult time, however, classifying Croak. He decides to describe Croak as representative of the "creative mind" (Wolf, 151). While Wolf does not go this far, Croak as creative mind acts similarly to a postmodern composer in the vein of John Cage. While Croak does not specifically write the music or lyrics the two characters present, he does much to shape it, namely by providing themes and, albeit vaguely, feedback. Similarly, postmodern composers such as John Cage provide the groundwork for composition of a piece, but leave much of the finished product up to chance procedures or performer interpretation over which the composer has little control. Specifically in regards to Words treatment of Age, Croak provides Words and Music with the theme, but refuses to offer feedback or instruction even as Words flounders. The subject is provided, but the final piece is left largely up to the two characters. The occasional thump of Croak's club does little to clarify things for Words or Music. Instead of acting as a traditional composer, or even author, Croak prefers only to provide thematic content and leave the composition itself up to chance.

As the play continues, Croak, dissatisfied with either party's solo efforts, implores Words and Music to work together. While Words is clearly unsuccessful alone, Music performs only marginally better. It is when Words and Music combine their efforts that their attempts seem to be most successful. As the two work together, albeit after needing much persuasion, Music is described as "invit[ing] Words" to join him with "warm suggestion[s]" (Beckett, 337-338). Words fights against the combination of their efforts, but Music takes charge, giving Words

musical suggestions with which to work, almost mimicking the fashion in which Croak suggests ideas with which to work. Music here seems to be acting as a more traditional composer or conductor, providing Words with the assistance and information Croak refuses to give. When Words is unable to articulate the emotions prompted by Croak, Music steps in to bridge the gap between the language and articulation of emotional concepts. Music leads Words to a joint effort which is ultimately more satisfying for Croak.

The outcome of the joint effort portraying the prompt "the face" (Beckett, 338), while not lauded by Croak, does not appear to offend him as his reaction to the attempts at "love" appear to have. Despite a seemingly increasing satisfaction in Croak with the portrayal of "the face," the words used become increasingly cryptic. Words begins the play by attempting to portray Croak's prompts with traditional, syntactical language. While some of the ideas he invokes, such as "movement of the soul" (Beckett, 333) seem inarticulate and vague (once again highlighting a weakness of language) the reader generally understands and is accustomed to the words and style he employs. As Words struggles to work with Music, however, his prose gradually transforms into poetry, finally ending on a poem wholly different from the accessible prose with which he began. Using almost no punctuation, Beckett writes "Towards where/All dark no begging/ No giving no words" (Beckett, 340). While all these words are simple words to which the reader or listener would be accustomed, the subject to which they are referring and their placement syntactically pushes against traditional structural norms. Despite this move toward a more difficult, less comprehensible writing style, Croak refrains from violently thumping his club, suggesting a more satisfying outcome.

In this final poem, Beckett chooses for Words to repeat the phrase "no words" several times, just as the language Words uses is being pared down to almost nothing. Immediately

preceding the first mention of this phrase, Words seems to be on the verge of telling a story about a woman who may be dead. As Music joins and Croak, in anguish, cries "No!" (Beckett, 339), Words rather suddenly drops to this poem with only several words per line. It is at this moment that Croak's audible pain ceases. The suggestion "no words" here seems to refer to an extreme paring down of words rather than subtraction of words altogether. The journey Words describes here is one of moving through darkness, trash, and scum, to come upon a wellhead. This suggests that the removal of words helps to lead one through destruction to a spring. While the entire removal of words does not seem to be Croak's or Beckett's goal in this work, there is a suggestion here that a reduction of language is necessary to articulate the emotions Croak presents and to arrive at something more promising than the trash and scum Words initially describes.

This result seems similar to the one previously explored by Joyce. Like Joyce, Beckett finds a way to combine musical and linguistic elements to enhance communication, particularly communication of emotion. Beckett, however, does not stop at the intersection of language and music. As his career continues, Beckett often does without the human voice and language altogether. His plays *Quad* and *Nacht Und Träume*, for example, feature music and dancing rather than typical verbal narration. This type of experimentation, moving away from the standbys of a particular art form, mirror closely the experimentation John Cage explored throughout his career.

Section II: John Cage's Experimentation

While Schoenberg did much to revolutionize the landscape of classical music, subsequent composers found the need to take Schoenberg's experimentations even further. While speaking of Schoenberg's achievements, John Cage suggested that "when he emancipated the dissonance,

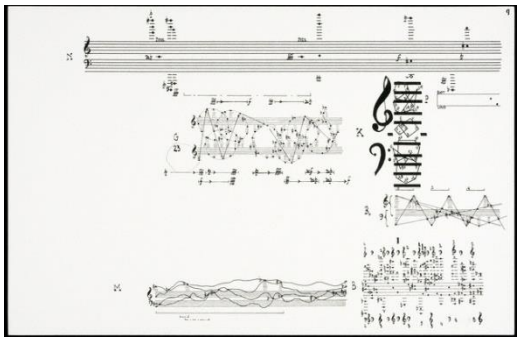
[he] should have gone farther and emancipated music from its notes" (Kostelanetz, 59). To achieve the task Cage wished Schoenberg had begun, he experimented with freeing music from both its traditional notation as well as its traditional sound and instrumentation profile. Cage's instrumentation ranged from pianos prepared with large objects in the body to water poured from one vessel into another. His notation went even further, opting for graphs and images over traditional musical notation. Cage's work deprives the listener of expected musical sounds and the performer of readable notation, opening up the term 'music' to encompass all aural phenomenon and providing performers with notation which does not have an agreed upon referent.

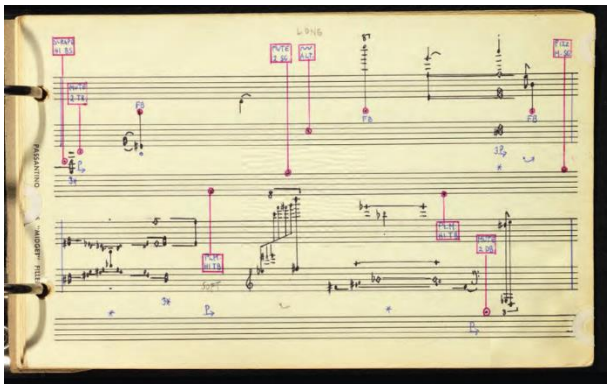
Despite these challenges presented by Cage's work, critics continued to look for artistic expression and communication. In his review of Cage's percussion work, Virgil Thompson wrote that Cage's experimentation was "used to intensify communication" (Kostelanetz, 72). As to what precisely is being communicated, Thompson does not say. He does, however, describe this communication as "original expression of the highest poetic quality" (Kostelanetz, 72). Despite stopping short of interpretive claims, Thompson stands firm in his assertion that Cage's percussive music is meant for communication.

If this experimentation does result in communication, it seems to be of an indirect, cryptic nature. In attempting to define the communication Cage pursues with his art, Richard Kostelanetz talks about the implications Cage's pieces can hold. Specifically referring to the piece *4' 33"*, Kostelanetz points to the "redefinition of musical art" and the realization that "no musical piece can twice give us the same aural experience" (Kostelanetz, 108). While no traditional music is played for the course of the piece, audiences are still communicated large concepts about the state of music and art.

These claims, however, seem to contradict Cage's own comments on his work. In his essay, "Form is a Language," Cage writes, "The observer-listener is able to stop saying I do not understand, since no point-to-point linear communication has been attempted" (Kostelanetz, 135). Instead, Cage focuses on the indeterminacy of the way in which his notation will be interpreted, offering listeners new aural experiences with each performance. In other pieces, his focus lies more in the method of composition, opting to use sources such as the *I Ching* to determine the actual composition of the piece. Experiments such as these suggest a greater attention to composition method rather than the sound or emotional implications of the finished piece. These claims on communication in his work also apply to Cage's readings of literature. Apart from composing musical works, Cage also published mesostic poetry. In discussing his methods for writing poetry based on James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* Cage writes that he read the book "upside down and backwards," (Cage, 136) looking more for patterns and letters rather than reading for any type of conventional communication.

Despite these claims for indeterminacy and a lack of communication, many of Cage's works were written for and performed by only one pianist, David Tudor, and then only with a handful of variations. For example, Cage's "Solo for Piano" was written with Tudor in mind and only realized and performed by him in two ways (Molesworth, 252). In this way, Cage's pieces written specifically for Tudor seem almost a direct communication with him, requiring a translation from graphic notation to playable musical notation, as pictured below from The Paul J. Getty Museums article "Emigres and Experimentalists: Music in Los Angeles" and Helen Molesworth's *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933-1957*. As Helen Molesworth notes in her book on the Black Mountain College, Cage "composed his Solo for Piano for one performer, as a private communication" (Molesworth, 253).



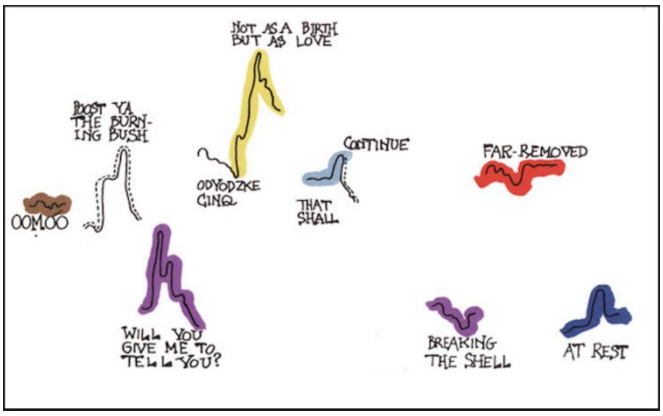


While Cage's detailed instructions for the piece leave much up to the performer to decide, his familiarity with Tudor suggests that he knew Tudor would prepare his realization, taking much of the indeterminacy between notation and performance out of the equation. Like Beckett's Croak, he provides Tudor with a base layer of instruction and then allows his performer to take liberties, while stopping short of improvisation. This method of composition and performance removes a large portion of the control most composers assume. It does not, however, allow the performer to improvise or play anything they want. Instead, Cage, like Croak, lands somewhere in the middle, handing over some liberties to the performer while retaining power over a structure and framework. This tension between composer control and performer interpretation stems from the language of musical notation Cage develops. As his musical notation does not

have an agreed upon referent, he knows his instructions and images may be interpreted many different ways.

This level of communication seems separate from the communication assigned to Cage's work by Thompson and Kostelanetz. While Cage's work does make grand statements about the nature of art, this broad statement could be applied to virtually any of his pieces. In his communication with the performer, Cage works on a much smaller scale, providing the performer with a formal language which requires interpretation of the language itself and artistic interpretation of Cage's intentions. By opting for this new musical notation, Cage finds the same middle ground as Croak between authorial control and chance in performance.

A similar scenario can be seen in Cage's piece "Aria," pictured below from the International Contemporary Ensemble's article "Chance Control or Controlled Chance?".



Rather than specifically state notes, key, duration, or dynamics, Cage uses color and shapes to communicate a general feeling to the performer which they are then charged with interpreting. While this notation differs from Croak's more explicit emotional prompts, the striking colors Cage uses suggest a similar emotional communication with performers. Cage leaves interpretive room for the performer, allowing each performer to make his obscure instructions into whatever piece of music they believe fits those best. Despite the open endedness of this musical notation,

Cage uses color to communicate a mood for each line of text. The performer intuitively changes his emotional expression based on the color indications. Again, Cage seems to be offering the performer a new language to be translated and transcribed into the known language of musical notation, although with vague, subjective instructions.

Section III: Translating Emotion

This idea of translation can also be related to Cage's overall composition technique. In his autobiographical statement, Cage references something he was told by Oskar Fischinger which had a profound effect on him: "Everything in the world has its own spirit which can be released by setting it into vibration" (Cage). Following this conversation with Fischinger, Cage recollects that he began "hitting, rubbing everything, listening, and then writing percussion music" (Cage). This starting point for composition, combined with Cage's tendency to use everyday objects and machinery in his music, suggests a connection between the concrete world and his music. As suggested in the previous chapter, the gap between language and the world to which that language refers was an issue among semiologists and philosophers of the time. While music is often considered the most abstract of the art forms, free from the constraints of meaning and focused more with form, this connection Cage establishes between the concrete world and his musical compositions suggests otherwise.

Cage explores similar ideas in a statement he gave to the Music Teachers National Association in Chicago in 1957. Titled "Experimental Music," his speech explores the changes composition has undergone with advancements in technology. While describing experimental music, he states, "one may give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music, and set about discovering the means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments" (Cage, 10). This statement seems to suggest a lack

of expression or communication in experimental music. He continues, however, by describing the emotional reactions humans have to nature. His argument is not that no expression takes place in experimental music, but rather, that the natural freedom of experimental and chance music allows emotion specific to each listener. This type of emotional experience is, in Cage's view, more connected to the natural way humans experience emotion and react to the world, suggesting a strong tie between the concrete, natural world, human emotion, and his music.

In a similar fashion, Beckett strongly connects his musical and acoustic elements with the concrete world and the human body. Returning to Beckett's *Words and Music,* we see that Beckett chooses to present the characters Words and Music with universal, emotional human experiences to articulate, such as love, aging, and the face to which Croak has an intense emotional response. Like Cage explaining the emotional response to experimental music by comparing it to human emotional response, Beckett connects musical expression to natural human emotions. Despite the abstraction of attempting to articulate complex subjects through music, particularly for a reader seeing only 'music' for Music's lines, Beckett seems to believe that the combination of words and music can articulate human emotions.

Beckett's choice to name his third character Croak relates to this connection to human conditions. The idea of a croak, a noise somewhere between speaking and singing, implies a bodily, guttural sound. This combined with Croak's use of a club paints him as a primal human exploring base human emotions. The reader gets very little information about Croak, giving him an abstract nature that could represent man in general in a primitive state. Beckett's use of primitive human characteristics combined with the focus on articulating human emotions or experiences suggests that these conditions, and the desire to explore them through words and

music, is innate and universal. Beckett connects these conditions, desires, and the comfort of words and music to any man, modern or primitive.

While both Beckett and Cage are exploring ways to articulate and evoke the concrete world and universal human emotions, they both do so outside of the structures and languages associated with their art forms. By removing these structures, both Cage and Beckett end up with a communication somewhere in between their own control and the interpretation of the reader, listener, or performer. By providing the characters Words and Music with minimal instruction, Beckett represents this type of composition in Croak and suggests the emotions Croak presents to his comforts can be articulated in art composed in this manner.

This issue is furthered when comparing written or virtual aspects of these pieces with their performances. Music written in typical notation can be sight read or imagined by a trained performer, lessening the difference between virtual and performed music. John Cage's written music, however, takes careful translation and realization, making an imagination of the piece nearly impossible. A similar phenomenon is portrayed in the written version of *Words and Music.* As no musical notation is included in the written version, readers must simply imagine what Music might sound like with only Croak's instruction and Beckett's descriptions to reference. Here the reader is put into a similar position as Words and Music. While we are not charged with the task of composing anything, we are given virtually the same amount of instruction as the characters themselves. Again, an absence of language results in a middle ground between control and interpretation.

Beckett's later plays do away with language and sound altogether. One such play, *Breath,* reminiscent of the sound implied by the name Croak, features only human cries and breathing sounds in place of language. While a play consisting mostly of breathing sounds seems like it

would be difficult to control or structure, Beckett is still specific about how the play should be performed. He specifies the brightness of the stage lights on a scale of 1-10 and the number of seconds to hold the cries, breathing sounds, and silence. While the reader might expect a play consisting only of breath to have little to no instruction, Beckett instead applies strict guidelines and structure to the bodily noise of breath.

We can see similar tendencies in Cage's *Water Walk*. This piece, as the name suggests, consists largely of sound produced by water. The instruments Cage uses include a bath tub, a toy mechanical fish, ice cubes, and recorded sound. The piece does feature a piano, but only for the purpose of banging the lid shut and placing a vibrating fish toy on the strings. While it seems difficult to control the exact sounds and timing of these instruments, Cage's score is rather specific. It includes "a list of properties, a floor plan…, three pages with a timeline (one minute each) with descriptions and pictographic notations of occurrence of events" (Work Detail: *Water Walk*). While Cage concedes that the timings may not be accurate, he does specify that the performer should have a stopwatch and perform the actions as faithfully to the score as possible. This restriction of time is of course essential to more traditionally composed and performed music. The same musical attention to time is seen in many of Beckett's works as well in which Beckett provides counts for the number of seconds a silence should be held or for how long the breathing and crying should continue in *Breath.* Despite a turn away from traditional music or instrumentation, moving more toward noise, both artists still choose to apply restrictions and structures typical of musical notation, although communicated in entirely new means.

By favoring noise and auditory elements in his plays, Beckett appears to give precedence to music and noise over narrative. When commenting on opera, Beckett was quoted as disliking the art form due to its tendency to place music as "subordinate to storytelling or picturing

emotions" (Debrock, 69). Rather, Beckett would prefer a performance art which features music as more or equally prominent as narrative. This preference for music over narration is represented in *Words and Music,* where the little narration that exists focuses on Words and Music competing equally to communicate emotions. While the picturing of emotions is key in this play, Beckett seems to have found a balance between the prominence of music and the role of emotion given that the play centers around this conveying of emotion, but rejects traditional storytelling. If this method transfers to Beckett's other work, it seems that his rejection of language and favor of noise and music all works toward communication of larger emotional themes rather than narrative. As many of his performances feature minimal to no words and no narrative, the intention seems to lie outside of narrative communication and instead on emotional experiences.

This issue of narration, or abandonment of narration, is less obvious in music. Much has been written on the topic of musical narration, but critics seem unable to agree whether narration exists at all in music. One argument for narration in music suggests that tracking themes and their variations through pieces is a form of narration. But as composers abandoned the languages and structures established for art music, listeners lost the narrative threads they were once able to follow. In his book *After the Wake,* Christopher Butler illustrates this idea through the listener experience of hearing the Karlheinz Stockhausen piece *Kontra-Punkte*. He explains that Stockhausen's piece does not allow the listener to "use one's memory of earlier music (of conventional figuration) to create any pattern of relationship" (Butler, 12). This abandonment of "conventional figuration" leave "no theme, or quasi-narrative development of theme" for the listener (Butler, 13). If we apply these concepts of thematic development and narration to Cage's pieces, we find even further disillusionment than in Stockhausen's piece. In his piece *Water*

Walk, for example, the listener does not even have traditional instruments or sounds to follow. One could, conceivably, track the objects used throughout the piece, but this does not provide the type of thematic development Butler associates with narrative. As discussed before, Cage is focused more on emotional experience and reaction in his music than on musical themes or narration through theme variation.

Despite the turn away from traditional musical and performance languages, Beckett and Cage do harness the formal and structural aspects of music to assist in their articulation of the concrete world and human emotions. The tendency toward noise and traditionally non-musical sound seems to suggest a turn away from communication, but the application of structures to this noise allows for emotional translation and interpretation by performers, readers and audiences. Like Joyce harnessing some of the formal aspects of Schoenberg's work, Cage and Beckett use these formal musical aspects to add structure to the noise of their art and communicate the material world and human emotions.

While Joyce in the Sirens episode of *Ulysses* supplemented language with additional communication methods, Cage and Beckett opt to build their communicative art forms from an entirely new language, by eliminating either musical notation or words. Rather than emulating musical structures, as Joyce did, Beckett and Cage throw out the languages and structures which comprise their art forms in favor of new communication modes. As represented by Beckett's character Croak, this elimination of known languages leaves these artists in a middle ground between authorial control and performer and listener interpretation. In their communication and structure, they again stray from the established rules and choose to structure their work with images, diagrams, and stopwatches. In doing so, they pare down the focus on narrative and thematic narration, instead focusing on the articulation of emotion through words, noise, and

music. Despite the differences in the way these authors employ musical structures, both Samuel Beckett and James Joyce look to music to assist in communication of emotion where language alone is lacking.

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